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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Monday, October 4, 1937.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "LABEL REQUIREMENTS UNDER THE McNARY-MAPES AMENDMENT." Information from the Food and Drug Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Here's another Monday, friends, and another letter from our Washington correspondent who "covers the news" from the Food and Drug Administration. She starts out by saying:

"Next week, on October 10th, the latest revision of the Government standards for canned foods will be in operation. You remember I wrote about this last month. There are several new points in the regulations, which I believe will interest your listeners."

Now before I read any more of the letter to you, I'd like to make an observation of my own: We housewives need to be more discriminating than ever as label-readers if we want to get our money's worth in canned goods. Listen to this: (quoting from our Washington letter)

"Under the McNary-Mapes Amendment to the Food and Drug Act definite standards have been set up for certain canned fruits and vegetables, - namely, peaches, pears, apricots, cherries, tomatoes, and peas. When these products fail to qualify in certain respects, but are still considered wholesome food, they must be labeled 'Below U.S. Standard-Good Food- Not High Grade'. So if a buyer is a persistent label-reader she will notice whether or not the product is substandard, and expect it to be priced accordingly. It may be that for her intended use, a higher quality is unnecessary.

"If you see the expression 'Below U.S. Standard- Slack Fill' on the label, it will mean that the canner left a little too much empty space in the top of the can. This is usually through carelessness rather than design. Or the last half of the statement may be 'Contains excess added liquid', which explains itself."

Still quoting from my correspondent's letter, she says: "One of the new requirements in the revised standards relates to the fill of mushroom containers. The trade lists ten different sized cans, and no two of them, when properly filled, hold the same amount of drained solid mushrooms. For instance, one little can holds 2 ounces. Another, that looks very much like it, can, and now must hold two and four-tenths ounces. If both are sold for the same price, of course the buyer gets more for her money when she buys the second. Before the standard went into effect the larger can might have held only 2 ounces, and the purchaser would have been deceived if she thought she was getting more for her money by taking the larger can.

"Perhaps your radio friends would like to know what is meant by drained weight. According to the Food and Drug Administration, drained weight is determined by draining the contents of the containers 2 minutes on a sieve having 8 meshes to the inch. The solids remaining on the sieve are transferred to a dish

R-EC and weighed. The drained weight of sour cherries and mushrooms is taken as they come out of the can. The fill standards for such fruit as peaches, pears and apricots call for a definite amount of the raw material going into the can, rather than the cooked solids coming out of it.

"Now, returning to the McNary-Mapes Amendment: Certain deviations from the standards set up for each product are permissible. However, the canner is required to tell what they are, in a special statement made in a specified way. This information in each case is to be printed on a strongly contrasting uniform background in very plain large capital letters of specified size. No diligent label-reader can miss it.

"Take peaches. One of the requirements for standard canned peaches is that the pieces shall be in halves. But peaches cut up some other way are equally good food. If the canner packs quartered peaches, or sliced peaches, or even whole peaches and says so plainly, the buyer will not expect to find Melba halves when she opens the can.

"If the peaches are up to standard in every respect except that they are not uniform in size, the statement, 'peaches, ungraded for size' tells the story. Units in a can are now considered uniform sized if the weight of the largest piece in the can is not more than twice the weight of the smallest piece in the can. This provision gives packers a little more leeway than formerly, but still gives the consumer a desirable product.

"Again, some peaches are packed in water instead of in sirup, for special uses. The statement, 'Water pack peaches' is then required on the label. If the can contains white peaches, or freestone peaches, instead of the yellow peaches described in the standard, that fact also goes in a special label statement.

"In a similar way, Kieffer pears must be so labeled, as well as quartered or sliced pears or water pack pears. 'Peeled apricots' are specially labeled since standard canned apricots are unpeeled."

Continuing to quote from our Washington news letter, we come to cherries. Our writer says: "There are two sets of standards for cherries- those for sweet cherries, and those for the red sour cherries. The word 'cherries' only on a can means sweet cherries, usually the yellowish-white varieties. If the can contains sweet cherries of any other type, such as Bing cherries or black cherries, the label must say so.

"Standard canned sweet cherries are unpitted. If the cherries are pitted in the proper way, they are labeled 'Pitted Cherries' just as sliced peaches are designated in a special statement. But if the canner misses a few pits and the cherries have more than 1 pit in 20 ounces, they fall in the substandard class. The label must then read 'Below U.S. Standard- Good Food-Not High Grade.' The correct name for the product is 'Partially Pitted Cherries.'

"This brings us to the canned red sour cherries- the pie cherries. As they are generally pitted before canning, the standard calls for pitted red sour cherries, and any other kind are deviations. The standard is very strict in limiting pits to 1 in 20 ounces of cherries. That's about the amount of fruit in a Number 2 can. If there is more than 1 pit in 20 ounces of cherries the can is substandard and must be so labeled. It must also show the name 'Partially Pitted Red Sour Cherries' in plain and conspicuous type."

That's the end of my Washington letter. It leaves me firmly resolved to read labels more attentively than ever. I certainly don't want to find more than 1 pit in a cherry pie, and as for mushrooms,- the bigger the can the better, I say, provided it isn't slack-filled!

